
2019 State Of The City Address

Good afternoon everyone!

On behalf of the City of Torrance, thank you for joining me today. And, thank you for helping to make Torrance such a great city.

Once again, there is one person, I must specially acknowledge. And, that is my wife Terry. Thank you for 42 years of marriage and allowing me to serve the past 1,921 days as the mayor of Torrance.

In the words of Ralph Kramden from the Honeymooners, "Baby, You're the Greatest."

I also want to take a moment to thank the special folks who helped us today.

Let's give a round of applause for our police honor guard and fire bagpipe Corp for helping us today and protecting us every day. It is okay to love our first responders.

How about a round of applause for Pastor Hurst! Bill, the Pastor of First Lutheran, has been a wonderful friend who may not know how to say the word no. In addition to his pastoral duties, he has hosted congressional town halls – foster children gatherings – blessings of the animals – and, he has joined me a number of times for my breakfasts with the clergy. I know I can call on pastor Hurst for advice, counsel and always a great invocation. Thank you, Bill.

Thank you Satyin Kumra for leading us in the pledge of allegiance. He and his wife Sujata are recently naturalized citizens of the United States. They are part of the wonderful diversity we enjoy in the City of Torrance. Satyin sent me a thoughtful, personal email after casting their votes in the last election that has inspired me as your mayor. I will be forever grateful for our friendship.

Lastly, thank you to Michael Smith, Jin Chun and Jamie Le who produced the wonderful video you just saw and for helping me put my words together for today's State of the City!

I also want to thank our city council assistant, Zulma Gent. She keeps my calendar every day making sure I'm where I should be, dressed appropriately and know what to say. And, she does all of that even though she is a big USC fan.

Now, to the business at hand. I feel like I was just standing here giving the 2018 address. And although the year went by quickly, let me tell you that we accomplished quite a bit.

And, by "we" I mean the city staff and the city council. It really is an honor to work with everyone day to day and to witness their dedication to our great city. Please, join me in honoring our City employees.

And speaking of the impact our employees make in our community, a few weeks ago we lost one of the greatest.... Mary Giordano....

Many of you had the honor of working with Mary in the course of her 30-year tenure with the City. She has left a significant footprint in this community. She had a style and grace that truly let people know her caring was genuine.

Mary will be remembered for her generosity, loyalty, spirit of heart and willingness to help others. Our heartfelt condolences are with her family, co-workers and many friends. She will be deeply missed by all that had the privilege of knowing her.



We also saw some change in our executive management as you met them in the video. I have to compliment City Manager, LeRoy Jackson on his succession planning because we were able to promote from within.

In April, Mr. Danny Santana took on the role of Community Development Director. Many of you may be very familiar with Danny because he was once hitting the pavement working with you on your projects, expanding your businesses, exploring potential business locations, and facilitating you through the permit process. He is known for his ability to develop strong partnerships with our business community and was instrumental in the One Mile, One Charger Electric Vehicle Project and of course, our always growing craft brewery industry. Cheers to you, Danny!

In July our City Engineer Mr. Craig Bilezerian, became our Public Works Director. Craig has been credited for his work on the Del Amo Blvd. Extension that helped ease the traffic congestion on Crenshaw Blvd. and also for his ongoing work with the Torrance Transit Park and Ride Regional. I first met Craig while I was serving on the Civil Service Commission almost 2 decades ago and I know he is a skillful problem solver with a vast knowledge of the City. Congrats Craig!

I'd also have to address the many concerns voiced about recent conduct taking place during our city council meetings. While our priority each meeting is to conduct city business, we must not forget that our public forum also allows for anyone to exercise their first amendment right to free speech.

Torrance has historically enjoyed non-offensive language during our meetings; however, freedom of expression under most conditions is allowed. As much as we may not like profane language, for the most part it is protected speech.

What's not allowed is willful interruptions by a group or groups of persons halting our ability to conduct business. We are doing everything within our power, to provide a safe environment for our citizens to participate in your local government.

So, as we move ahead, I hope you'll join me in coming together to restore civility to our meetings, by treating each other with respect and honoring everyone's right to participate.

I don't have to tell any of you that Torrance is a great city... You're all a part of it. And it is each one of you and your deliberate efforts that help to make us a city where we maintain balance in our ever-changing economy.

We are a community comprised of people committed to making Torrance a place where lives can be enriched every day through a plethora of activities and programs. Where we eat, where we shop, where we play and relax... those are all aspects that make Torrance unique. Our unique and enhanced way of life... the Torrance way of life.

And I can positively say there is no other place like it... there is only ONE Torrance.

This past year our City departments have been able to provide many enhancements to programs, infrastructure, economic development and much more.

At the 2018 State of the City Address we were just weeks away from the grand opening of the Splash Pad at Wilson Park. And, 2019 was our first summer where it was open to the public and let me tell you, it was used so much that.... Well, I won't get into that.

It is operating now and with our great California weather, still available to enjoy!

Let me ask, how many of you are parents? What about grandparents?

So, it appears the majority of us understand the importance of nurturing our youth. Kids and young adults are who allow us to be a regenerative community. One where the children of today will continue to enjoy Torrance and want to start their own families here. So, it only makes sense that we invest in them.

We recently replaced park play equipment at Wilson Park and just completed a redo at El Nido Park that will be open next week! We've continued our 8th grade and 12th grade student government programs, and given our younger citizens a voice through our Youth Council!

And this engagement is paying off. The programs have generated a strong pool of applicants for City staff positions after students graduate from college... and an impressive 79% of TUSD students attend college.

Torrance also sees a high number of young voters. For example, during the most recent election we had almost 11 hundred new young Torrance voters.

Investment in our children starts early, and, as a result, Torrance Unified School District boasts an impressive 96% graduation rate. And, these students are not just taking classes and acing tests. Our kids are active! They are interning, volunteering, playing sports.

Successful Torrance youth programming exists because of the collaborative partnerships with private businesses and other public agencies. The Torrance Refining Company provides \$60,000 annually for the summer internships with the City. Torrance Memorial Medical Center provides professional services for the teen mental health outreach program and the Torrance Fire Department continues to enhance the “Grow Your Own” program that is designed to take young individuals interested in becoming firefighters and provide them a hands-on opportunity to grow and learn about a career in the Fire Service.

Starting with our Fire Explorer program, this group meets weekly with a focus on character, firefighter basics, and work ethic to help prepare young men and women for a successful fire academy experience. The Torrance Fire Department has partnered with El Camino College to provide early access to college-level classes for high school students. The partnership allows the Torrance youth to obtain pre-requisite Fire Academy education while still in high school. Once completed, individuals can apply to become an Auxiliary Firefighter where they volunteer under close supervision, learning and participating as apprentice firefighters which could lead to opportunities of becoming a Fire Cadet.

The Torrance Police Department also expanded its Juvenile Diversion outreach which originally focused exclusively on court-ordered counseling for at-risk youth. Today, it inspires hundreds of youth with important leadership and empowerment training for students in 5th and 8th grades.

TUSD works with the City to solicit and publicize applications for the Youth Council and Volunteer Leadership programs. That’s why it is no surprise that more than 1,000 Torrance students are engaged annually in local government activities, internships, and volunteerism.

In fact, this year was the inaugural US Conference of Mayor Youth Summit and I along with 2 South High Students joined Mayors and students from across the country to actively address some of the most important issues facing young people today.

We are doing great things with these kids which makes Torrance an attractive city for young families.

Our schools have always been a big draw for families. Torrance Unified School District which continues to rank in the top 20% of the almost 1,000 school districts in California, and as I mentioned earlier boasts a graduation rate higher than the State average, continues to provide the best environment for our youth. With the completion of capital improvements funded by Measure Y, Torrance Unified under the strong leadership of Superintendent Dr. George Mannon, continues to find areas open to improvement including replacing windows, expanding parking lots and resurfacing damaged concrete. TUSD with the help of Measures T and U also completed the new North High School auditorium and South High just had their auditorium dedication on Monday. Measure Z that was passed in 2009 funded the renovations of aging tennis courts, new stadium seating, and replacements of turf, but I believe the best investment they’ve made for their students is in safety.

In August, throughout the entire district — from elementary through high school — the district rolled out the addition of the Raptor Technologies school security systems. Raptor is a visitor management software that can accomplish the basic goals of tracking visitors on campus, but also links to nationwide law enforcement databases. This will allow TUSD to better screen their visitors - in return increasing the safety of our students.

But who do we really need to thank for the success of our students? Of course, Our Torrance Teachers. Thank you for guiding them day to day to be lifelong learners and good citizens.

This year, one of our very own, Megan Wareham from JH Hull Middle School, was recognized as one of the 16 teachers named Los Angeles County Teachers of the Year. Dr. Mannon, please send our congratulations.

As I mentioned, a regenerative community should be a goal for any city. There are more elderly people today than ever. I’m sure you’ve heard it, people are living longer. And, according to the Population Reference Bureau, by 2060 the population of Americans 65 and older is expected to double. When that time comes, Torrance will be ready because the steps we are taking now.

Caring.com named Torrance 82 out of 302 in Senior Friendly Cities nationwide.

With approximately 61 Senior Living options in our city, Torrance Seniors can take advantage of our robust senior programming and activities.

That’s probably why we hold the #2 spot for Best Places in California to Retire according to “Investment.com,” beating out nearby Pasadena, Irvine, Glendale, Burbank and Thousand Oaks.

Through City programs, providing a sense of community is just one way we are creating healthy communities.

With the proximity to great healthcare including nearby Harbor-UCLA and Kaiser, our residents and visitors can conveniently treat their medical needs. Of California's approximately 420 hospitals, "U.S. News & World Report" continues to recognize Torrance Memorial and Providence Little Company of Mary in the top 30 Regional Hospitals that meet high quality standards. In addition, both were among the 20 Southern California hospitals to make "Newsweek's" list of the world's top 1000 hospitals.

Our hospitals remain at the pulse of medical advancements so we do our best to keep up.

Thanks to Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn - in partnership with UCLA Health, we are now able to provide our community with the West Coast's first ever Mobile Stroke Unit. Having the UCLA Mobile Stroke Unit in Torrance means our community is receiving individualized stroke treatments catered to their medical needs. It means they are being provided proven stroke treatments faster than ever before. It means patients are being treated with compassion, support, and clinical and technical expertise.

This is a big deal for us.

Our residents, the residents in the greater South Bay, and our visitors will have access to this ground-breaking program that will ultimately improve the quality of OUR lives. Accelerated treatment will improve OUR patient outcomes. Treatment that can save our friends and family members. Healthy communities lead to healthy identities and that is of intrinsic, immeasurable value.

Of course, working hand in hand with the Mobile Stroke Unit is our Fire Department. We are proud to announce that after 2 and a half years of hard work, Torrance Fire Department has achieved accreditation through the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) granted by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) as of March 13th, 2019. The accreditation has improved the way we deliver services to you and the community, and has established strategies for continuous improvement in the years to come.

The Torrance Fire Department is the fifth fire agency in California and the seventy-third agency in the nation to achieve CPSE Accreditation in addition to having a Class 1 ISO rating. A Class 1 rating indicates how well-protected your community is by the fire department and saves residents and businesses money on fire insurance.

The Torrance Fire Department, as part of the Los Angeles Area Regional Training Group (RTG) is excited about the launch of the Los Angeles Fire Training Conference, focused on professional development and training for firefighters of all ranks. The collective comments from local fire chiefs show a high level of support and optimism towards this new venture. More than 9000 firefighters throughout the Los Angeles Area will have access to top quality training. Our very own Torrance Fire Chief Martin Serna, who is also the President of the Los Angeles Area Fire Chief's Association, provided high praise for the endeavor.

Also, providing the City with safety is the Torrance Police Department under the direction of Chief Eve Irvine.

According to our most recent statistics, the City of Torrance has experienced another reduction in overall crime rates. The Police Department continues to proactively address crime with innovative and unique approaches. Our approach begins with a strong partnership with our residents and businesses who immediately report suspicious activity, and is coupled with effective police responses to meet the needs of our community.

Automated License Plate Readers and Unmanned Aircraft Systems or drones as many of us know them, also serve as great resources to help solve crimes and keep our communities safe.

Just four days into the year, many of our police personnel responded to the multiple-victim shooting at the Gable House. Even though it was an extremely chaotic scene, we are proud of how our Dispatchers, Patrol Officers, neighboring agencies and Forensic team handled the call. That long night was immediately followed by 30 hours of around-the-clock investigations.

Detectives, Gang investigators, surveillance teams and SWAT quickly identified and arrested the suspect. The results of this investigation were highlighted during an internationally televised press conference- which was another opportunity to fully recognize the great work of our police department.

Now, let's talk about a different form of technology.

In late July 2019, Torrance Police Department detectives were successful in identifying a suspect in the 46-year-old homicide of an 11-year-old-girl. Detectives investigated the case throughout the years, conducted over 2,000 interviews, and smartly preserved biological evidence. Preserving the evidence for all those years allowed technology to finally catch up. Utilizing innovations in DNA testing, Detectives used a Genetic Genealogy Analysis that provided them with a

lead. Detectives followed up on the lead through traditional investigative methods and were able to identify the suspect who they learned had already died in Arizona. This new technology not only helped detectives solve a horrific crime but helped provide resolution to a family. Detectives will continue to use the latest DNA technology in an effort to solve additional cases.

Even with all the recent changes in state legislation, the Torrance Police Department is committed to working with our residents and neighboring agencies to ensure our schools, businesses, and citizens are aware of the latest tactics of safety.

The Police Department also works with issues dealing with social services. Our Community Lead Officers along with other local agencies work with our homeless population to actively assist these individuals with legal and mental health issues. City Council and our Social Services Commission jointly met this week to continue to explore and work to find real solutions to reduce homelessness.

The safety of our community is always a priority.

So, we continue to monitor and track coyote activity with our 24-hour hotline, online reporting and mobile app. And with the council recently passing the updated management plan, this month marks the start of a five-month coyote trapping program. When we first encountered the influx of coyotes, we didn't have the experience to successfully co-exist.

The Torrance Coyote Management Plan, which has been replicated by many cities in LA County, establishes strategies to minimize conflicts between humans, their pets, and urban coyotes using education, behavior modification, and implementation of a tiered response to aggressive coyote behavior.

So, I bet your wondering... who is working this 24-hour coyote hotline?

Well! Our 24-hour Interactive Communications Officers continues to keep the community connected in the event of an emergency. In addition to tracking coyotes, they manage our emergency notification system, Torrance Alerts and all other forms of interactive communications including our social media, website and e-notifications, newsletters, digital signs, our AM radio station 1620 CitiSOUNDS, CitiCABLE, the disaster hotline and much more.

How many of you have sent an email to our webmaster at midnight? What about a Facebook message or comment at 4 a.m.? *** I'll bet you were surprised to get a response back within minutes. Our staff works closely with Police, Fire and the Office of Emergency Services to communicate to the public so that our first responders can concentrate on keeping the community safe and secure.

The Torrance Refinery continues to demonstrate transparency in it's operations and open in their communication. In fact, very soon we will be going live with TorranceAir.Org, the air quality management project that is designed to show near real time air quality measurements for our City. Sponsored by the South Coast Air Quality Management District, this will allow the public to better understand the quality of Torrance's air and will measure from various locations within the City.

Maintaining and modernizing our infrastructure is important to us. In addition to all of the pavement improvements, the City recently completed the annual Sidewalk Repair for Handicap Accessibility. Approximately 40,000 square feet of sidewalk was repaired and 67 handicap ramps were constructed to provide a continuous, unobstructed walking surface. Also, trees causing the sidewalk displacements were removed and replaced or pruned to reconstruct the sidewalk at proper grade. All of that on time and within budget!

Here is another to share, during recent storms, storm drain pipes failed in Paseo De Arena and Via El Chico causing damage to adjacent roadways. These storm drains were constructed in the 1950s and were severely deteriorated. This repair effort replaced pipes in August just in time for the upcoming rainy season.

Always working towards building economic development, our history of being fiscally prudent has helped us maintain our position in today's economy. Unemployment is forecast to continue at the natural rate and for Torrance, unemployment rates continue to drop. Still lower than long-term average our unemployment rate remains at 3.8%.

It's safe to say that part of what makes Torrance unique is how we partner and work together to do more with less. While we continue to focus on business retention and attraction, we are always looking at services on a broader scale for our business community... assistance that benefits a larger portion of the community rather than solely focused on individual businesses. We continue to support the wide diversity of types and sizes of businesses in Torrance.

Many of you are familiar with the City's Office of Economic Development and of course the woman behind it, Ms. Fran Fulton.

That's probably because of our business visitation program. I know I learn much of what I know about Torrance businesses because of these visits. They give members of the Economic Development team the opportunity to meet with companies to learn more about them, but also allows our businesses to make contact and get to know a "face at city hall", whether they have an immediate need or something comes up in the future they know they can contact us to help. If there is something that a business needs that a City department can't address, we can bring in one of our partners such as the Chamber of Commerce, LA County Economic Development Corporation, the Governor's Office of Business Development or a number of other organizations and resources that provide services to businesses.

Over the past year we have also sponsored or participated in numerous events that support our business community. California competes tax seminars including California Competes Tax Credit and L.A. County Contracting Connections that allow businesses to learn what benefits are available to them to allow them to remain in California.

Another way we hope to attract and retain businesses is with regional broadband. This will provide high speed internet to the business community. Thanks to the South Bay Workforce Investment Board we've obtained \$4.4 million from metro and another 1.2 million from the Governor's Office that will cover the basic infrastructure.

The South Bay WIB is doing great things for our region. This year, their Fit for Gold leadership program has been successful with 30 completing the adult program, and another 17 completing the youth program. Their rapid response program to assist with downsizing companies, trained 173 people to re-enter their career search and after receiving a \$12 million grant they will be working to place 5000 students from El Camino College or West LA College in apprenticeships focusing on aerospace, bioscience or technology over the next 4 years. And for our veterans who have returned and will be reentering the workforce, they have received a \$500,000 grant to assist them in job placement.

There are several projects that Economic Development is working on with and through Community Development, Public Works, the Police Department and others. One I'm especially excited about brings together Discover Torrance, The City and the Del Amo Fashion Center. I'm excited to announce that the Del Amo Fashion Center will be home to the next California Welcome Center!

It's the mission of each of the California Welcome Centers scattered throughout the state to enable all visitors to have the best experience possible, and they take that local-is-best approach to heart. And what gets better than Torrance!?

The welcome center will be staffed with personal travel concierges, knowledgeable experts who are ready to provide information that will enhance and enrich your visit no matter what your focus is—the arts, local culture, family activities, sports, the great outdoors, shopping, or all of the above. They'll have advice on what and where to eat, where to stay, and how to get there. Just another benefit for our visitors!

And speaking of visitors, Discover Torrance, the Tourism Business Improvement District is finishing up its 9th year and is gearing up for renewal for another 5 years. The intent nearly 10 years ago was to increase awareness of Torrance as a destination for visitors. To build on the already strong business traveler stays and to add weekends and leisure travel. All indicators point to a positive result in occupancy, average daily rate, and revenue per available room. As Discover Torrance gears up to renew the Tourism Business Improvement District in Torrance it is key to continue to look at methods to boost more "heads in beds" as the hoteliers say.

We continue to look for opportunities to redevelop Downtown Old Torrance and improve Citywide signage and wayfinding and are currently working with a planning consultant. The project will be funded by grants from Cal Trans and Southern California Association of Governments. The Downtown Business Association continues to draw in visitors with special events. Saturday they will be hosting the Downtown Scare Down. Participating businesses will be decorated and handing out candy for kids. There will be pumpkin painting, music and more.

As we mentioned in the video, there has been a lot going on at the Sares-Regis Development. Some of you may have seen the Torrance Commerce Center signs. But while the site is under construction, don't think it's not getting used... The property is quite popular and is seeing its own limelight in several tv and on-screen productions.

Did anyone catch Amazon Prime Video's "Homecoming" starring Julia Roberts? I won't ruin it for you but the Sares-Regis Property plays an important role in the storyline. And speaking of filming, Torrance continues to remain a favorite of location scouts and producers. We receive so many film permit applications that we are currently working to have Film LA take over the process. They handle everything from on location monitoring, neighborhood notification, production planning, to of course facilitating the permit process.

A week from today we will be celebrating our Torrance Businesses at the Torrance Art Museum hosted by the Office of Economic Development. We welcome more businesses to join us and you can find out more by contacting Fran Fulton.

There is a lot to celebrate in our business community. Very recently, 4 Torrance businesses, Torrance Bakery, a staple in our community; Blue Stem Hotel, who opened this year as Torrance's first boutique hotel with modern, luxury rooms; and Sage Millimeter and Smog City Brewing; companies from our thriving Tech and Brewery industries were selected for the Los Angeles Business Journal's "Most Influential Family-Owned Businesses" and will be recognized in the October 28th special supplement of the paper!

Tech companies like Sage Millimeter choose Torrance because they can benefit from the proximity to our leading aerospace, defense and telecommunication companies. One of the most important uses of millimeter waves is in transmitting large amounts of data. Sage Millimeter focuses on providing components for commercial and military system applications. Sometimes people forget that Torrance has one of the largest populations of aerospace suppliers and our companies continue to grow commercially and obtain large military contracts.

Our breweries have not slowed down either. Smog City Brewery has quadrupled their lease area in Torrance and now have two satellite tasting rooms along with Smog City West on Hawthorne Blvd. It really is great to visit restaurants around the country and see Smog City, Torrance, CA on the menu.

As you can see, breweries have been proven successful in the City... so successful comedian, George Lopez will be making his imprint in Torrance.

The upcoming project is called the Brews Hall at Del Amo, and it not only includes Lopez's restaurant, Chingon Kitchen, it also encompasses a burger-focused brewpub from sportscaster Colin Cowherd called The Herd. Beyond that, a scaled-down location of local seafood chain Rock'n Fish; a poultry place called Chicken The Way I Like It, and two different breweries including Buzzrock Brewing Co., which will operate off of a four-vessel, 20-barrel on-site brewhouse, and the second called George Lopez's Ta Loco Brewing Co. There will also be a full bar available on site. It will reside just across from Ralphs and Target on Del Amo Circle.

We understand that sometimes companies relocate from Torrance, but when they decide to return, we welcome them with open arms. Hello Kitty and friends will soon be neighbors once again. Sanrio recently signed a lease for a 21,000 SF office space at Gramercy Plaza on 190th. They are currently in the permitting process so we anticipate their move to be soon.

Honda continues to be a leader in both business development and serving the community.

If you've ever wondered if the Helpful Honda People are real, ask Torrance resident Leon Prechtel, a Navy veteran with a 224-mile, four-and-a-half hour commute to and from work. Prechtel works in the Mojave Desert but resides in Torrance to remain close to our top-quality healthcare and the specialists of his special needs son.

In March, Prechtel was surprised with a new Honda from Southern California Honda Dealers Association. They really do live by their motto, "Power of Dreams."

American Honda also celebrated 60 years in North America this year and continue to make Forbes lists including #28 on the Worlds Most Valuable Brands, and #36 on Top Regarded Companies in 2019...and we definitely hold American Honda in high regard. Thank you, sincerely for your continued investment in our community

Also, in the Automotive Industry, startup Canoo unveiled it's flagship vehicle last month as it moves closer to production in 2021. Focusing on space and value, Canoo will be the first ever subscription only electric vehicle.

The idea is to bring an experience similar to Netflix to the auto industry.

Torrance is always evolving and even our long-time partners are committed to the modernization of the City. Just take a look at the Boulevard.

Across from the Del Amo Fashion Center the Mueller Company has done great things with the Del Amo Crossing. With a 5-story medical center and abundant mixed-use retail space including a brand-new 24-Hour Fitness and Urban Plates Restaurant, and a 12 story Class A business tower, it is at the height of commerce in Torrance. It really is a prime venue for leading edge corporations and enterprising start-ups.

Speaking of leading edge, located at the Del Amo Crossing, EP Wealth was named as one of the New York based publication, Inc.'s list of 5000 Fastest Growing Private Companies. With more than 50 of the employees from the greater Torrance area, not only do they manage \$5.2 billion in client assets (as of July 31, 2018), but they are also involved in the community, presenting in Torrance high schools and participating in several events annually. Co-founders and best

friend's Brian Parker and Derek Holman, chose Torrance for its weather, proximity to the airport and all things So Cal and have remained for more than 15 years. As part of the revitalized Del Amo Crossing, they love seeing what's happening with the City and while they continue to grow nationally also plan to grow their headquarters here in Torrance.

And just across the street, a local favorite of our community, Mitsuwa Marketplace will be making its move from their current location on Western to the Del Amo Fashion Center. If you haven't visited, you're missing out! Mitsuwa has a wide variety of unique Japanese grocery products and fresh authentic Japanese cuisine. Stepping into the market and food court, you really get a true feel of the Japanese culture. They frequently hold special events that would fill a foodie's soul.

Speaking of Foodies, in June a meal fit for a giant came to visit. The Foodie Space gave visitors a chance to take tons of glorious food pics to their heart's content with larger than life food-themed exhibits AND all interactive exhibits were created by local artists. Another event that is returning to the Del Amo Fashion Center, the Panana Night Market.

Panana is the Inland Empire's largest multicultural food festival featuring 100+ local food vendors, food trucks, music, and live performances. Last month it was introduced to the Torrance Community and they will be returning next weekend for more food, fun, and live entertainment. It is great to see all the hashtags of the Del Amo Fashion Center and Torrance floating all over social media and it's also an innovative way to attract visitors to discover the mall and Torrance.

Another great event that brought more than a thousand people to Columbia Park was LA Opera in the Park! Guests were transported to the bustling cafes and hidden corners of 19th century Paris for a free broadcast of Puccini's La Boheme. The opera was transmitted live in high-definition video from nine cameras at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion to a large LED screen in the park. With the support of Supervisor Hahn, we were able to bring the operatic experience to those that might not venture out and attend an opera in person in addition to our seasoned opera enthusiasts. It really was a successful event and we hope to see this type of event again.

Any Torrance Voters in the room? This March will mark a first for us... our very first district election. Districts 2, 4 & 6 will vote for their representing Councilmember; a vote that will decide the direction the City of Torrance will take in the next 4 years!

So, what do these districts mean? Well, our councilmembers will continue to govern at-large, serving all of Torrance which allows for our continued, accessible, customer service. I urge all of our residents to start researching candidates now, know your district, and take hold of your privilege to vote! You each have a voice and these new districts will ensure you have a representative familiar with your specific neighborhoods.

Every successful community has its own strengths and weaknesses, but they all share some common characteristics. It's clear for instance that successful communities involve a broad cross-section of residents in determining and planning the future. They also capitalize on their distinctive assets -- their architecture, history, natural surroundings, and home-grown businesses -- rather than trying to adopt a new and different identity. Express your concerns, voice your suggestions. Successful communities prosper because of committed involvement, pride in our community, and retaining our values.

And that's why we recently launched "Join the Conversation."

In surveys conducted this year, more than 93% of respondents rated Torrance as an excellent or good place to live and we are striving to keep it that way! You may not be aware that in the last few years alone, Sacramento and D.C. have taken millions of dollars in funding and local tax revenue from Torrance.

In fact, of the last two county sales tax increases that were passed, only 12 cents on the dollar is being returned to Torrance.

Your priorities are important to us, we want to hear from you. We're listening! So, join the conversation at: TorranceCA.Gov/JoinTheConversation.

And, next year your participation is needed for the 2020 Census. The results help determine how billions of dollars in federal funding flow into states and communities each year. They also determine how many seats in Congress each state gets. Results from the 2020 Census will shape our community, so I urge you to participate.

Now, I wanted to try a little experiment.

Can everyone raise one hand to your ear. Okay... now raise that same hand halfway between your ear and full extent of your arm. Now raise your hand as high as possible.

Okay raise it higher...

Ok.... You can relax now.

So.... There are a couple things I want to point out here.

One, you all interpreted my directions differently. Some hands were here, some were there... Some used their right hand – some the left. But that's okay, because its all of our diverse ideas and approaches as a whole that makes our community unique.

Secondly, when I asked you all to extend your arm as high as possible, then said higher... how many of you were able to extend your arm even higher? I'm seeing a lot of nods. This just goes to show that we sometimes set goals lower than our actual limits. That there is so much more we can all achieve... But we tend to hold back.

John F. Kennedy once said, "For I can assure you that we love our country, not for what it was, though it has always been great – not for what it is, though of this we are deeply proud – but for what it someday can, and, through the efforts of us all, someday will be."

I urge you all to approach everything by lifting your arm that extra inch higher. Take that extra reach to really excel. It's our unique thoughts, ideas, and experiences that are inherent to us that connects everyone. It is through our efforts, all of our efforts working together... that makes us one.

One who governs as a whole.

One who is diverse and rich in arts and culture.

One who provides a sense of community and vision.

One that earns trust, offers hope, and delivers security.

One built on a foundation designed to be balanced.

One Torrance.

Thank you.